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THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS.

THE Parliament of Religions was the name of a drama, played, not in a church, but in a "Palace of Art," with pagan gods in marble watching the performance and wondering what the lesson of it was. This Parliament was a genial transmutation of religious animosities into social friendships, but it was neither Pentecost nor Babel, although it had resemblances to both. It was discords looking for concord among the very same brambles where their enmities grew; a congregation of wanderers in the desert of dead creeds, searching the skies for another pillar of fire and a miraculous pilot-cloud. It was like the old monks praying in gloomy cells for light, and refusing to go outside the cloisters into the wholesome world where the blessed sunshine was.

The advertised object of the Parliament was :

"To unite all religion against all irreligion; to make the golden rule the basis of this union; to present to the world the substantial unity of many religions in the good deeds of the religious life."

This call, while rather indefinite, was construed liberally, as it should have been, because "all religion" may mean a syndicate of all the sects, or it may signify all the virtues in their abstract form, for the meaning of the word "religion" has been much improved in these latter days. "All irreligion," in its new interpretation, may refer to every vice and error, or it may apply, as in the days of religious persecution, to the characters of nonconformists, heretics, unbelievers, malignants, and all who are outside the pale of church, or mosque, or synagogue. Therefore, the value of the purpose must be measured not by the rhetoric of the call but by its actual mean-

ing. If it means a closer union of all men in the bonds of mutual affection, it is good ; but if it means a union of those who practise forms of worship against those who do not, it is bad. The more the sects divided, the safer it was for men ; and schism is better than union wherever the churches are strong. The less unity there is in the creeds, the better it is for the religion of knowledge and good works.

As a rule, the appeals for unity were made in a broad and liberal spirit, that said "brotherhood of man," and meant it ; but occasionally was heard the old, familiar denial of unity, except upon such terms as the churches may prescribe ; for instance, the Rev. Thomas Richey, of the General Theological Seminary of New York, treating the aspiration for unity as a sentimental chimera, said : "Let men dream as they will, it is the power of religion that is the only one unifying bond that can ever bind together the sum of the human family." It was the old formula, the hoary commandment, coupled with a threat, that has carried strife and moral desolation round the world, "You must be brothers in the church, or you shall not be brothers at all." For thousands of years theological religion has been dividing the "human family" into hostile tribes ; and now Doctors of Divinity tell us that nothing but religion can reunite that separated family in the bonds of Nature's brotherhood.

There were some wise men in the Parliament who saw the value of dividing religion into religions, and religions into sects, and on this part of the subject the Rev. Dr. Philip Schaff, of New York, said : "Before we discuss reunion, we should acknowledge the hand of Providence in the present divisions of Christendom. Sects are a sign of life and interest in religion." The Rev. George T. Candlin thought otherwise, for in agony of soul he cried aloud, "Our divisions are strangling us."

This cosmopolitan assembly was not strictly a parliament, because extemporaneous debate was absent. It was rather a World's Fair of theological exhibits with a sort of Midway Plaisance attachment for the *bric à brac* of creeds. It was a conventicle where delegates on the platform representing different and opposing liturgies delivered essays on theoretical religion to a miscellaneous laity on

the floor. It was an œcumenical council to compare theologies, although the spirit of non-theological religion found expression in the contributions of the editor of this magazine and some other delegates, who saw the dawn of a new religious era containing less myth and more truth, less creed and more deed, less dogma and more proof.

Toward one another, with few exceptions, the delegates were tolerant, sympathetic, and kind, but there was discord among the creeds. In daily repetitions the orators expanded a sentiment into a religion, and they proclaimed it in a multitude of echoes as "The Fatherhood of God, and the Brotherhood of Man." What they really wanted was a "revised version" of this newer testament. They had been spiritually fed for years on Fatherhood and Brotherhood, but there was not enough of that manna and quail for the wants of the world. They were afraid to say so, but their aspiration was for more Fatherhood in God, and more Brotherhood in Man. While there was in the harmonies of the Parliament a strain of *Te Deum Laudamus*, there was also in the minor keys a wail of *De Profundis*, "Out of the depths I have cried to thee, O, Lord ; O, Lord, hear my voice." It was the plaintive cry of disappointed souls for a new God.

If the intention of the congress was to show to heathens, Jews, and pagans, the superiority of Christianity to their benighted faiths, its purpose failed. Long before the end of the Parliament our hymns of self-glory were sung in a penitential key. In the presence of the heathens and the pagans, Christian Doctors of Divinity came to the mourner's bench and made confession that Christianity had imposed itself upon mankind by force, fear, deception, dogmatism, and ceremonies. In sorrow they said that it showed no sanctity of manners for the imitation of other creeds ; that as a theory of heaven it was well enough, but that as a rule of righteousness for practical uses on this earth it had not set a good example ; and that the time had come for "christianising Christendom."

One day, a visitor impressed by the occasion, said to a friend, "Are the old religions worn out?" The answer was, "No, they are found out." Some of the proceedings justified the sarcasm, for listening to the testimony as it was occasionally given from the plat-

form, the impartial observer wondered whether the old religions were on exhibition for censure or for praise ; and whether the Parliament was convened in order to repeal them or merely to repair them and adapt them to the twentieth century. Many of the Christian exhibitors advertised their faith and exalted it above all the others as the moral and spiritual essence of Divinity itself, the only power to save souls and give them life everlasting ; and yet Christianity was the only religion there that was accused and condemned by some of its own teachers consecrated and ordained for its evangelical and sacramental work ; a phenomenon that puzzled all the foreigners from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand.

At the World's Fair proper, more awards for excellence were given to the heathens than it was thought possible they could win ; and so it was at the Parliament. In the competition of religions the heathens carried away the prizes of most value, while the agnostics and the unbelievers cheered. Christianity received "honorable mention" here and there for its material achievements, but its exhibits of moral and religious work were not of a high order. Its mottoes and precepts, its amulets and charms were much admired, but it got no gold medals for its national or international morality. For these reasons there is a suspicion in many pulpits that it was unwise to call the Parliament, and that it has weakened the churches in America. The Rev. Dr. Morgan Dix of New York, in a sermon preached on Sunday November 12, said :

"We have recently been treated to the sight of what was called the Parliament of Religions. I do not believe that those who projected the scheme were animated by any feeling of antagonism to Christianity. I impugn no one's motive. I do say, however, that the Christians who were there were attacking the cross of Christ. I do not forget, but thank God for it, that some strong utterances were heard from Christian men who stood up for Christ in that odd company with as much strength as could be exhibited with courtesy to the other guests. I doubt, however, that if the prime movers of that Parliament had wanted to spread agnosticism they could have made a better move. It was a masterpiece. Through the rose-colored haze of that atmosphere one seems to discern above the heads of the Jewish rabbi, the Indian priest, the Greek patriarch, and the learned advocates of Shintoism, Brahmanism, and Romanism, a banner bearing this inscription, 'To the Unknown God.'"

It was not so much a sacrifice to the Unknown God, as it was

the anticipatory worship of the new God coming with a better dispensation ; a prayer for the blending of all souls into one universal soul. As expressed by the Rev. P. C. Mozoomdar, a Hindu priest, "This unity of man with man is the unity of man with God, and the unity of man with man in God is the kingdom of heaven."

There was nothing said against Christianity in the Parliament that had not been said by scoffers and sceptics long ago, and from them it might easily be endured, but it grieved the soul of Dr. Dix that "Christians who were there were attacking the cross of Christ." Perhaps they were only thrown in for emphasis to give pungency to the scolding, but some of the invectives hurled at Christianity by Christian clergymen were somewhat exaggerated, as will appear from the following specimen taken from the address made by the Rev. Dr. Alger of New York : "The great Anti-Christ of the world is the unchristian character and conduct of Christendom. We put the kingdom of heaven in the background and work like incarnate devils for every form of self-gratification."

On the other hand, some of the Christian divines who "stood up for Christ in that odd company," in their exaggerated praise of Christianity made it so aristocratic, arrogant, exclusive, and self-righteous, that its portrait as painted by Dr. Alger was not much improved. A very fair quality of dogmatic and rather uncivil Christianity was presented by Professor Wilkinson, a theologian of Chicago, who "stood up for Christ" and nobody else ; and who thought it necessary in doing so to tear away from Christianity all humility and toleration as blemishes on its character. Generously assuming that all our souls are "lost," he maintained that they could be "saved" only in the Christian church, and he said :

"The only religion that can be accounted true is the religion that is trustworthy to save. . . . Christianity leaves no loophole of escape for the judged and reprobate Anti-Christian religions with which it comes in contact. It shows instead only indiscriminate damnation leaping like forked lightning from the presence of the Lord. The attitude of Christianity towards all other religions is one of universal, absolute, eternal, and unappeasable hostility."

The above certificate of character ought to be accepted, because it comes, not from an untaught superstitious peasant, or a monk of

the dark ages, but from a professor of the University of Chicago, in the latter part of the overrated nineteenth century; not the ninth, but the nineteenth, in fact, almost the twentieth century. Professor Wilkinson fortified his position with many "forked lightning" texts from the Scriptures of the New Testament; but the difficulty with him is that his argument is obsolete.

Professor Wilkinson treated with contempt the "mysteries" of heathen religions; as if there were no "mysteries" in his own. He was immediately followed by the Rev. John Devine of New York, who glorified Christianity for giving to other religions a message of Fatherhood, Brotherhood, Redemption, Atonement, Character, and Service. Like a magician conjuring with his *abracadabra*, he overawed reason by presenting Christianity to the people as a "mighty mystery." Speaking of its founder, Mr. Devine explained that "in taking the form of man he did not seek the permission of ordinary laws, but he came in his own spiritual chariot in the glory of the supernatural." That is very much like the African theology that prevailed among the negroes in the days of slavery. They could not imagine any person going into heaven, or coming out of it, except in a "chariot." As hope was forbidden them in this world, they found some consolation in believing that some day they would be riding over the golden pavements of the new Jerusalem in a "chariot." They thought that when the sorrows of this life were over they would be carried up to heaven in a "chariot," and they lightened their bondage a little by singing "Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home." If the Christian religion is a "mighty mystery," then revelation reveals nothing, but conceals everything, and instead of solving religious puzzles, it creates them.

The belief was present in some of the divines that if the Roman Catholic Church could be excluded from it, Christianity would get along very well, while some others thought that the only religious unity possible was in the Church of Rome. The Rev. Mr. Maury, a French Protestant said, "The French people hold in abhorrence intolerance and hypocrisy, so that they could never endure the spirit of Jesuits and Pharisees." The Rev. Mr. Gmeiner, a Catholic, was of a different opinion, for he said: "The religion of Christ will

ultimately reunite the entire human family in the bonds of truth, love, and happiness." In his enthusiastic imagination, he conjured up an impossible future, and beheld, as in a vision, science again the bondmaid of religion in the service of Rome; the restoration of those benighted centuries, when men had the minds of asses, without the asinine bravery to kick; when the king owned the bodies of the people, and the bishop owned their souls; for, said this hopeful prophet, "the true home for all under God is the Holy Catholic Church." The science of his religion had convinced this learned ecclesiastic that man had not lived upon this planet longer than ten thousand years. The limit allowed by theology was formerly six thousand years, but he was willing now to grant four thousand additional years.

To the possible dismay of that reverend father, Mr. M. T. Elder, a Roman Catholic from New Orleans, came into court, gave himself up, and turned state's evidence against his church. He complained that it was losing strength and reputation, and that it was not great either in achievements or in men. He seemed to think that it was deficient in moral genius and intellectual vitality. With some bitterness of sorrow, he said:

"The great men of this nation are and will continue to be Protestant. I speak not of wealth, but of brain, of energy, of action, of heart. The great philanthropists, the great orators, the great writers, thinkers, leaders, scientists, inventors, teachers of our land have been Protestant. What does surprise me is the way we have of eulogising ourselves, of talking buncombe and spread-eagle, and giving taffy all round. But, truly, I cannot. When I see how largely Catholicity is represented among our hoodlum element, I feel in no spread-eagle mood."

Although the style of Mr. Elder was not a model of elegance, many of the addresses delivered by Christian delegates displayed eloquence of good literary quality; but much of it was pulpit eloquence, asserting, declaring, and proclaiming, without condescending to anything so rudely secular as proof, or even evidence; for instance, the Rev. Dr. Burrell, of New York, in a gush of scriptural metaphor and psalm, poured out his rejoicings thus:

"God be praised for this congress of religions. Never before has Christianity, —the one true religion—been brought into such open and decisive contrast with

the other religions of the world. This is indeed the Lord's controversy. The altars are built, the bullocks slain, the prayers are offered, and the nations stand beholding. Now, then, the God that answered by fire, let him be God."

This was a dangerous challenge, the language musical enough but it was gong-music, emotional declamation, and defiance. The Oriental Gentiles on the platform, guests of the Christian theologians, listened with heathen courtesy, while their entertainer gave them to understand that his particular special theology was the "one true religion"; and they looked at him with polite wonder when he challenged them to test it by the ordeal of fire, a plan of judgment that never was very truthful, and one that has long been abandoned by civilised law. Had the heathens and the pagans accepted the challenge, Dr. Burrell would certainly have lost, for God no longer decides by fire the vainglorious wagers of men. It is true, according to the Scriptures, that God answered by fire the appeal of Elijah, and thus enabled the Hebrew prophet to win the wager he had made with the prophets of Baal, but that was under the old dispensation, and such a miracle will never be done again. It is also true, according to the same authority, that Elijah took the losers down to the brook Kishon and "slew them there." A religion that stakes its character or its truth on the fiery ordeal by which Elijah won his victory at Mount Carmel, is rash when it invites a contrast between itself and other faiths; and it is doubly rash when it presents the tragedy of Kishon as a specimen of its toleration and its mercy.

Forgetting the work of their own missionaries, the Christians in the Parliament thought that the heathens there would bow down reverently before the spiritual splendors of Christianity, but the Mohammedans and the Buddhists and the Brahmans told them that the heathens knew Christianity well. They were sorry they could not give it a good character, because it had corrupted the manners of their people, broken the faith of treaties, fomented sedition, prevailed by violence, and had made the cross a menace to their freedom and the symbol of their subjugation. Satsumchyra, a Brahman priest, comparing the hypothetical Christianity of England and America with the "applied" Christianity of his own country, said:

"Our friends here have been picturing to you Christianity standing with the Bible in one hand and the wizard's wand of civilisation in the other, but there is another side, and that is the goddess of civilisation with a bottle of rum in her hand. Oh, that the English had never set foot in India! Oh, that we had never seen a Western face! Oh, that we had never tasted the bitter sweets of your civilisation, rather than that she make us a nation of drunkards and brutes."

And Horin Toki, after enumerating the blessings conferred by Buddhism upon Japan, said: "It is a pity that we see some false and obstinate religionists have been so carelessly trying to introduce some false religions into our country."

One day the Parliament was violently shaken by the speech of Kinza Ringa M. Hirai, a Buddhist from Japan. This address was very nearly Christian in its combative accusations and replies. With spiritual and ideal Christianity M. Hirai had no quarrel; in fact, he expressed great admiration for it; but he condemned the actual and material Christianity that had invaded the empire of Japan, and he sarcastically resented the inhospitable welcome given to the Japanese by the Christians of California. In his complaint, he said: "Among the innumerable unfair judgments, the religious thought of my countrymen is especially misrepresented, and the whole nation is condemned as heathen." He declared that the Japanese were not sectarian; that the wise and virtuous thoughts of all religions were adopted in Japan, and that from the beginning of her history, Japan "has received all teachings with open mind."

Having asserted that the religion of Japan was not at all jealous of other faiths, M. Hirai spoke freely of the injustice practised on his people by the Christians, and he said that among the vices brought into Japan by Western civilisation there were some "which were utterly unknown before and entirely new to us—heathen, none of whom would dare to speak of them even in private conversation." M. Hirai showed also that in the religion of diplomacy the Buddhists were as infants in the hands of the Christians. He proved that in the making of commercial and political treaties between his countrymen and the Western powers, the Japanese had been cheated in a systematic and highly civilised way. Further, that all efforts to revise and amend those treaties, so as to put them on the plane of

justice, had been consistently and persistently defeated by the Christians. It is not surprising that, smarting under experimental Christianity, M. Hirai should look with suspicion upon the emotional goodness and metaphysical benevolence of the Christian religion.

Under the meek and gentle exterior of the Orientals there was a stratum of what goes by the name of manly spirit. They were slow to anger, but they resented insult, for when the Rev. Dr. Pentecost of London, after advertising his own exhibit in a very boastful way, and contemptuously diminishing the Hindu gods, as not at all to be put in comparison with Christ, reflected with some coarseness on the chastity of those women who serve in the temples of India, a Hindu delegate, Mr. Gandhi, repelled the sneer as a calumny, and rebuked the self-righteousness of the critic by pouring pity on his head in this way; he said:

"This platform is not a place for mutual recrimination, and I am heartily sorry that from time to time a most un-Christian spirit is allowed free scope here, but I know how to take these recriminations at their proper value. . . . Some men in their ambition think that they are Pauls. These new Pauls go to vent their platitudes upon India. They go to India to convert the heathens in a mass, but when they find their dreams melting away they return to pass a whole life in abusing the Hindu. Abuse is not argument against any religion, nor self-adulation a proof of the truth of one's own."

This was dignified and severe, but lest the rebuke might fall upon other Christians, innocent of offence, Mr. Gandhi, with refined courtesy, spoke of the unfriendly censure cast upon the faiths of India, as proceeding from an "un-Christian spirit." There is an invisible, intangible ideal that appeals to the generous imagination as the "Christian spirit," but we must confess that often in its actual visible form, and in all theological comparisons, it is the spirit shown by Mr. Pentecost. It is incurable, because the opinion of many Christians is that Christ is gratified by flattery, and those who thus exalt him, think they escape the condemnation and come within the blessing of the promise, "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Professor Wilkinson

was frank and honest when he declared that the attitude of his own religion toward every other is one of "universal, absolute, eternal, and unappeasable hostility." That is not merely a sentiment ; it is history, and the explanation of it given by some people is that Christianity in the Wilkinson form is not the religion of Christ.

Several of the delegates presented essays on "The Personality of God," and in this discussion the Christians had the best of it, because they exhibited God as an exaggerated man, a concrete personality, a giant omnipotent, easy to comprehend even by the men who lived in the lower Silurian age of learning. Professor Valentine, a Lutheran, said :

"In Christian teaching, God is a personal being, with all the attributes or predicates that enter into the concept of such a being. In the Christian Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments this conception is never for a moment lowered or obscured. God, though immanent in nature, filling it with his presence and power, is yet its Creator and Preserver, keeping it subject to his will and purposes, never confounded or identified with it. He is the infinite, absolute personality."

It may be, that in the Scriptures "this conception of God is never lowered," for it is not easy to lower it, unless we make a "concept" of God lower in rank than man. Even in the Scriptures this conception of God, though never lowered, is very often raised ; and outside the Scriptures, too, it is raised by all enlightened men to moral and philosophical heights where idolatries never fly. Even the Hindu conception of God raises the Deity to a higher plane than the convenient shelf within easy reach where Professor Valentine puts his image. Manital Ni Dvivedi, of Bombay, said :

"This word God is one of those which have been a stumbling-block to philosophy. God, in the sense of a personal creator of the universe, is not known in the Veda, and the highest effort of rationalistic thought in India has been to see God in the totality of all that is."

The childish conception of Deity which prevailed when men first became afraid of God is thus compassionately treated by the Hindu.

"I humbly beg to differ from those who see in monotheism, in the recognition of a personal God apart from nature, the acme of intellectual development. I believe that is only a kind of anthropomorphism which the human mind stumbles

upon in its first efforts to understand the unknown. The ultimate satisfaction of human reason and emotion lies in the realisation of that universal essence which is the all."

As might have been expected in a parliament of religions, nearly all the delegates who spoke on that subject proclaimed the personality of God, although the form and quality of that personality changed like the shape of a cloud. It varied according to the faith and fancy of its advocates. Sometimes it was a sentiment, a hope, an intuition, and at other times a demonstrated fact. It appeared as a natural instinct, and also as a supernatural revelation. In one address it was a spiritual perception, and in another an intellectual result. Some thought that God was omnipotent, while others believed that he was bound by the impossible, like any mortal man. Amid the differences, there was a strong opinion that reason was not at all to be trusted in the search for God. The Rev. A. F. Hewitt, of the Paulist Fathers, made a very learned, eloquent, and ingenious attempt to place the personality of God on a scientific and logical foundation, and at the end of it confessed his own failure by calling, for assistance, on the supernatural. He said :

"It is the highest achievement of human reason to bring the intellect to a knowledge of God as the first and final cause of the world. The denial of this philosophy throws all things into night and chaos, ruled over by blind chance or fate. Philosophy, however, by itself does not suffice to give to mankind that religion, the excellence and necessity of which it so brilliantly manifests. Its last lesson is the need of a divine revelation, a divine religion, to lead men to a knowledge and love of God."

Supporting the argument of Father Hewitt, the Rev. Dr. Momerie rejected the "accident" theory and asserted that, "if the world is not due to purpose, it must be the result of chance"; but he soon broke away from his theology into the open fields of nature, where, according to Dr. Momerie, even God must obey the law. He said :

"When we say that God cannot do wrong, we virtually admit that he is under a moral obligation or necessity, and reflexion will show that there is another kind of necessity, viz., mathematical, by which even the infinite is bound."

All these bewildering guesses bring to mind the despair of the prophet when, lost in the labyrinths of the puzzle, he exclaimed :

“Who by searching can find out God?” Hard as the problem is, there are men who think they have discovered him in the infallible almanac, where it foretells, with scientific faith, the time of the eclipses, the rising and the setting of the sun, and the ebbing and flowing of the tides; while others think they have discovered him in supernatural revelations, although no two of their conceptions are alike. Jinanji Jamshedji Modi, a disciple of Zoroaster, said: “Evidence from nature is the surest evidence that leads a Parsee to a belief in the existence of the Deity. From Nature he is led to Nature’s God”; but Dr. Isaac M. Wise, a Jewish rabbi, said: “All knowledge of God and his attributes comes to man by successive revelations, of the indirect kind first, which we call natural revelation, and the direct kind afterwards, which we call transcendental revelation.” He did not explain the necessity for two revelations, and Horin Toki, a Buddhist bishop, denied them both. He looked upon the natural and the transcendental revelations of God as alike the creations of spiritual hasheesh, and he said: “We trust in the unity of truth and do not believe in the Creator fancied out by the imperfect brain of human beings.” This was a discord in the Parliament, but it was neither harsh nor loud, and it was rather a concession to the doctrine that the “imperfect brain” of man is not at all to be trusted as a theological guide. With a different purpose the same thought was used by the Rev. S. J. Niccolls, of St. Louis, who believed that the Creator could not be “fancied out” by any human brain, but was manifested through the power of religious feeling; and as to the question of God’s personality, he said:

“We cannot bring to its contemplation the exercise of our reasoning faculties in the same way that we would consider some phenomenon or fact of history. He who is greater than all hides himself from the proud and self-sufficient; he reveals himself to the meek, lowly, and humble of heart. It is rather with the heart that we shall find him, than by pursuing him merely with our feeble intellects. To-day, as always, the heart will make the theologian.”

This was the key-note of despair, the knell of the debate, for ecclesiastics of high rank had been trying for many days to convince the “reasoning faculties” that God is a personality; and then comes a Presbyterian Doctor of Divinity, and tells them that it is useless

to address the reason, for "to-day, as always, the heart will make the theologian." The brain is dangerous, for logic lies there, and thinking-machines in the front of it make heretics, while the heart makes theologians. The argument is that men who exercise their minds, and make themselves intelligent, thereby become "proud and self-sufficient," and that God "hides himself" from them. But why should God hide himself at all? And why should the "reasoning faculties" of men be a terror to theologians?

The dual theology of old was practically abandoned by the Parliament, for the Devil was treated as a myth vanishing away. This was evidence of a radical change, for it is not long since men believed in a personal Devil as religiously as they now believe in a personal God, and in England, the Devil, was a personality "established by law." In all indictments it was charged that the defendant, "not having the fear of God before his eyes, but being moved and instigated by the Devil," did commit the crime of which he was accused; and he who doubted the existence of the Devil was anathema. True, as the "evil principle" or something of that sort, the arch-fiend occasionally walked across the platform like the ghost of Hamlet's father, but he received scant welcome, and soon faded into chaos. In fact he is Chaos now, according to the "revised version" as it was expressed by Mr. W. T. Harris, United States Commissioner of Education, who said: "God only is an absolute person. His pure not-me is chaos, but not a personal Devil." This made it necessary for Mr. Harris to revise the venerable dogma that the atonement was the payment of a debt due the Devil, and he presented what he called "a new theory of the death of Christ as a satisfaction, not of the claims of the Devil, but as a satisfaction of the claims of God's justice for sin." The revision presented by the Commissioner of Education was well received, and one of the delegates remarked that the new theory was "more rational" than the old one. Although the existence of the Devil was denied, a suspicion prevailed that he was yet alive, and that he was not in the ranks of the "unemployed," for Jinanji Jamshedji Modi, the Parsee, said: "The Zoroastrian idea of the Devil and of the infernal kingdom coincides entirely with the Christian doctrine. The Devil is a murderer and the father of lies,

according to both the Bible and the Zend Avesta." The conclusion is that so long as murder and lies remain the Devil is alive and well.

Satan, as a personality, having been dismissed from the service, there was no longer any religious use for "the infernal kingdom," and so that lurid bit of ancient orthodoxy passed from the real to the imaginary, and became a harmless figure of speech, a metaphysical corner of the conscience where lies the torment of the soul. According to the Rev. Charles H. Eaton of New York, "Hell is a spiritual and personal fact but has no objective existence"; and, indeed, something like that was the explanation of Heaven. It was purely a subjective revelation and a spiritual dream; "not a locality," they said, "but a state of mind."

The Rev. Joseph Cook of Boston, a very athletic Doctor of Divinity, having used up all the superlative adjectives of excellence to describe the Bible, hurled a sneer at the enlightened Greeks, and said :

"I take up the books of Plato, which I think are nearest to those of the Bible and press those clusters of grapes and there is an odious stench of polygamy and slavery in the resulting juices."

This clamorous comparison blown into the amphitheatre as from a brass trumpet, like the challenge of Brian De Bois Guilbert in the tournament at Ashby, was bold in its defiance of the Bible evidence, but it retreats into silence before the sorrowful cry of a woman. Mrs. Fannie Williams, a colored woman, and therefore an expert witness, said :

"Religion, like every other force in America, was first used as an instrument and servant of slavery. All attempts to Christianise the negro were limited by the important fact that he was property of a valuable and peculiar sort, and that the property value must not be disturbed, even if his soul were lost. If Christianity could make the negro docile, domestic, and less an independent and fighting savage, let it be preached to that extent and no further."

That mournful accusation uttered in a gentle voice rang out as when the cuirass of the haughty templar was hit by the spear of the Disinherited Knight, and a sympathetic vibration came back to the little woman from the heart of every man in the hall. Further, she said :

"Such was the false, pernicious, and demoralising gospel preached to the American slave for two hundred years. But bad as this teaching was it was scarcely so demoralising as the Christian ideals held up for the negro's emulation. When mothers saw their babes sold by Christians on the auction block in order to raise money to send missionaries to foreign lands; when black Christians saw white Christians openly do everything forbidden in the decalogue; is it not remarkable if such people have any religious sense of the purities of Christianity? 'Servants obey your masters' was preached and enforced by all the cruel instrumentalities of slavery, and by its influence the colored people were made the most valued slaves in the world. The people who in Africa resisted with terrible courage all invasions of the white races, became through Christianity the most docile and defenseless of servants."

The spirit, broken by what she called "the slave Bible," appears to have been inherited by Mrs. Williams, for she still walks among the churches, wondering where the seats for the colored Christians are; groping in the Christian temples behind the "color line," in search of that "holy communion" which is not for her, nor for her people. Her soul, scarred by the lash of the slave driver, seeks for healing and recompense at the altars of the men who plied the lash. She still believes in the "slave Bible," and worships a Christian idealism. In her own eloquent way, she said: "The hope of the negro and other dark races in America depends upon how far the white Christians can assimilate their own religion." There is pathos in that hope, for at the bottom of it is despair. If the white Christians have never yet been able to assimilate their own religion, what reasonable prospect is there that they will do it now?

It may be that the censure of Christianity by Christians is an argument in its favor, proving that it is able to stand fire, and that it has within itself the spirit of toleration and reform. This may explain the good-natured mocking and scoffing at the canonical mysteries by some "open and avowed" Christians. Here is a specimen from the genial humor of Dr. Momerie of London:

"Christ taught no dogmas, Christ laid down no system of ceremonialism. And yet, what do we find in Christendom? For centuries his disciples engaged in the fiercest controversy over the question, 'Whether his substance'—(whatever that may be—you may know, I don't)—'was the same substance of the Father or only similar.' They fought like tigers over the definition of the very Prince of Peace. Later on Christendom was literally rent asunder over the question of 'whether the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father to the Son' (whatever that may mean). And

my own church, the Church of England, has been, and still is in danger of disruption from the question of vestments—and clothes."

That sarcasm is comical enough but in all religions that appeal to the imagination and the emotions, vestments and clothes perform an impressive and awe-inspiring part. In Ireland the peasants think they give additional solemnity to their statements when they swear "by the holy vestments," and this proves that the emblematic meanings of surplice and gown, cope and stole, mitre and cowl, are essential parts of ceremonial religions; they ornament the ritual itself; they hypnotise the congregations by tinselled robes embroidered with cabalistic signs, and they make adoration fervent through spiritual fear. Dr. Momerie may not know it, but it is not impossible that their secret spell is part of the fascination that keeps him in the Church of England.

Dr. Brodbeck, of Hannover, Germany, had a new religion fresh from the mint of his own imagination, and he called it "Idealism." After it had been explained by the help of many negations, it proved to be a bright and airy nothing, as easy to grasp as a rainbow. It was not a religion, but a retreat from all religions, a flight in a balloon to the clouds. It was even sceptical of science, and had some doubts about the canons of geometry. In comprehensive denials Dr. Brodbeck said:

"The new religion is not a philosophical system of any kind. It is not atheism, not pantheism, not theism, not deism, not materialism, not spiritualism, not naturalism, not realism, not mysticism, not freemasonry; nor is it any form of so-called philosophical idealism. It is not rationalism, and not supernaturalism; also not scepticism, or agnosticism. It is not optimism, and not pessimism; also not stoicism, nor epicureanism; nor is it any combination of these philosophical doctrines. It is also not positivism, and not Darwinism or evolutionism. It is also not moralism, and is also not synonymous with philanthropism or humanitarianism."

From all those denials it may be assumed that the new religion of Dr. Brodbeck is not a mountain, or a valley, or a lake, or a house, or a ship, or a load of hay. It is the ghost of the indefinable "What is it," that Mr. Barnum used to show, and it is harder to catch than the sea-serpent of delirium tremens. All good people are eligible for membership in Dr. Brodbeck's church, but they must

not be too good, for he says : "We are not in favor of extremes ; in most cases virtue is the middle between extremes." This religion ought to be popular as a sort of half-way "split the difference" compromise between the principles of good and evil, between the canons of right and wrong.

The original founder of agnosticism was not Professor Huxley, but poor Jo, the crossing-sweeper, who "never knowed nothink," and although Dr. Brodbeck repudiates agnosticism, he must belong to the sect of Jo, for he says : "We do not know how things originated, or if they did originate at all ; so we do not know what will be the last end and aim of everything existing, if there is anything like last end and aim at all"; and so he patronisingly leaves these and kindred problems, especially the hard ones, to "science." "We do not know," says Dr. Brodbeck, "where we come from nor where we go. We do not believe in the resurrection, nor in the immortality of individuals, and so we leave it to science to decide how far there can be any existence after death." Dr. Brodbeck and his disciples do not believe in heaven, "because astronomy is against such a belief"; nor in hell, probably for geological reasons ; but, he says, "we acknowledge willingly the relative truth of those and similar dogmas." This admission at once invalidates Dr. Brodbeck's patent on a new religion. Belief in the absolute error and the relative truth of certain dogmas is not a new religion, but an old one. The new religion that is coming will not believe in the relative truth of any doctrine, article, code, or sacrament that is positively false.

One pleasant feature of the Parliament was the high character of the delegates, their learning, their eloquence, their hope for more truthful creeds, and the spirit of toleration that actuated most of them. Their courtesies were intentional, and as the essays were independently written, and not in contradiction of one another, their disagreements were accidental, resulting from differences of race, language, education, customs, and mental constitution ; but the discords were inevitable, because the religions of mankind are, from the nature of their separate claims, irreconcilable. It was a promise full of hope to all mankind when priests, presbyters, and bishops of opposing creeds declared that they would never again be so in-

tensely religious as to hate one another ; and the personal good nature of the delegates, excepting two or three, justified the boasting of Dr. Momerie when he said : “ And here on this platform have sat as brethren the representatives of churches and sects which during by-gone centuries hated and cursed one another ; and scarcely a word has fallen from any of us which could possibly give offence.”

Human sympathy is catching ; it is liable also to take the form of an epidemic and spread far beyond the boundaries we have set for its operation. When the representatives of churches and sects cease to hate and to curse one another, they will very likely cease to hate and to curse poor sinners, and that unbelieving multitude whose “ reasoning faculties ” have tempted them to go outside of all the churches and all the sects in search not of everlasting life, but of eternal truth, without which all religions are idolatries and everlasting life itself is worthless. If the Parliament shall make love instead of hate the stimulus of religious controversy, its influence for good will far exceed the educational benefit of the great Fair ; for if the representatives of churches and sects display toleration and charity, the congregations will catch the benevolence, for as Dr. Momerie himself said : “ It is the clergy who are responsible for the bigotry of the laity.”

The climax, or anti-climax, of the debate appeared on the last day of the Parliament in the speech and person of Christopher Jibarra, “ Archimandite of the Apostolic and Patriarchal Throne of the Orthodox Church in Syria and the Whole East.” The religion of the Archimandite was as broad and comprehensive as his name and title, for he had the magnanimity to say, “ I believe that God has preserved the Koran, and also preserved Islam, because it has come to correct the doctrines and dogmas of the Christians.” This opinion coming from a Christian prelate of high rank made a great sensation, for it was a confession that Islam instead of corrupting Christianity had reformed it ; but the right reverend confessor went farther than that, and made a greater sensation when he proposed that both of them be superseded by something better than either, and he was generously willing to leave the making of this new religion to the inventive genius of the Americans. He said : “ As Co-

lumbus discovered America, so must Americans find a true religion for the whole world, and show the people of all nations a new religion in which all hearts may find rest."

The greatest sensation of all was in reserve, and it came like sudden thunder when the Archimandite, imitating American customs, began to talk, not like a cloistered abbot, but like a free and enlightened fellow-citizen. As if he had been trained all his life in American politics and was merely taking part in a national convention, he proposed that all their conflicting theologies be referred to a committee on resolutions with instructions to report a platform of principles for the new religion. He said :

"All the religions now in this general and religious congress are parallel to each other in the sight of the world. . . . From such discussions a change may come, perhaps even doubts about all religions. . . . Therefore, I think that a committee should be selected from the great religions to investigate the dogmas and to make a full and certain comparison and approving the true one and announcing it to the people."

There was nothing visionary or theoretical in that proposal ; it was eminently practical ; but unfortunately, the committee was not appointed, the great opportunity was lost, and the phantom of unity which the Parliament had been chasing for three weeks disappeared.

Although the unity of God was the prevailing sentiment of the Parliament, the dual character of Holy Writ was confidently declared by some individual delegates, who asserted that while it might be scientifically false in certain places, it was even in those very errors religiously true. Its theological accuracy was not at all impaired by its philosophical mistakes, and the Rev. Dr. Briggs, fresh from his heresy trial, said :

"We are obliged to admit that there are scientific errors in the Bible, errors of astronomy, geology, zoölogy, botany, and anthropology. . . . There are such errors as we are apt to find in modern history. . . . But none of the mistakes which have been discovered disturb the religious lessons of the biblical history."

This is true only when the so-called errors are in parables, or in language obviously figurative or allegorical. When they appear as realities, revealed by divinely inspired prophets and apostles, their mistakes do seriously "disturb the religious lessons" they pre-

tend to teach. A statement which is historically false cannot be divinely inspired, nor can it be religiously true. Do those doctors of divinity, who so devoutly worship God, believe that he ever inspired his prophets to make mistakes in astronomy, in geology, in history, or in anything? And do they believe that he needs any such mistakes to aid him in the moral government of the world, or in the religious instruction of mankind? Do they think that a falsehood, as soon as they make it "scriptural," becomes true? There never was a book so sacred that it could sanctify a lie. All truth is holy, whether it be written in books, or stones, or stars; and all error is unholy, no matter in what scriptures it may be.

Dr. Briggs made this confession from the platform of the Parliament: "We cannot defend the morals of the Old Testament at all points." If so, the Testament ought to be revised, and all those points excluded from it that cannot be defended; for so long as they remain in it they teach false theories of morals to multitudes of men, women, and children, who are not so learned as Dr. Briggs, who accept the whole of the Testament as true, and who believe it "at all points" and at every point as the infallible word of God. Morals that cannot be defended ought to be condemned. It is not within the power of the Sanhedrim, or the Synod, or the Œcumenical Council to convert bad morals into good religion, or to make Holy Scriptures out of errors in astronomy, geology, zoölogy, botany, history, and anthropology. Whether the delegates intended it or not, that was the lesson of the Parliament.

Some of the delegates gave a new definition to the word "religion," making it a system of work instead of worship, of practice instead of prayer. Amid signs of general approval, the Rev. Dr. Hirsch, a Jewish Rabbi, said, "Character and conduct, not creed, will be the keynote of the gospel in the church universal." Others expanded the word until it became large enough to include the science of mathematics as well as the moral code, and they made every truth eligible for membership in the new communion, and every error "cursed and excommunicate."

The Parliament provided a sort of intellectual crucible in which all the creeds will be tested and purified as by fire. That sectarians

of a hundred theologies have brought them to the furnace is a sign of social progress, and a promise of larger toleration. He who fears the fire has no faith, for whatsoever is true in his religion will come out of the furnace as pure metal, leaving the dross to be thrown away.

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